

CDFG – OSPR

SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND EVALUATION PROGRAM (SSEP)

Program Objectives and Guidelines

The Scientific Study and Evaluation Program (SSEP) provides a mechanism for investigating, evaluating, and improving applied Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) programs, best achievable technologies, and our knowledge of the adverse effects of oil spills in the environment. The goals of SSEP are authorized in the Government Code § 8670.12. The program also supports scientific and technical research that will enhance the department's natural resource damage assessments, injury quantification, and restoration capabilities and knowledge base.

The following are the operating guidelines and objectives for the SSEP:

1. Well defined goals will be established for the program.
2. Dedicated staff within the OSPR Scientific Program will be committed to provide program management and administrative support.
3. A Technical Review Committee (TRC) will be established to review and rate project proposals that will then be submitted to the Steering Committee for prioritization. The TRC will consist of eight to ten members (primarily OSPR staff with some non-state cooperators) selected by the Chief of the Scientific Branch.
4. A Steering Committee will provide program direction and evaluation and will rank projects for priority.
5. Final project selection will be provided by the Chief of the Scientific Branch and the Administrator.
6. Written project proposals will be solicited annually; solicitations will include the SSEP criteria that projects must meet and proposal formatting requirements. Every project must either be proposed or sponsored by an OSPR staff member.
7. All proposals will be rated and ranked for funding according to established criteria included as an attachment to this document.
8. It is intended that all projects will be selected and all contracts prepared by the beginning of each fiscal year.

9. The results and products of all projects will be evaluated by OSPR staff, and will be maintained in a central location at OSPR headquarters. These reports/results shall be made available upon request.
10. Recipients of any SSEP funding will be strongly encouraged to publish their findings in appropriate peer reviewed journals.
11. As part of the overall SSEP budget, a contingency fund will be established to address unforeseen project needs throughout the fiscal year.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The objective of the Steering Committee is to provide overall program direction and evaluation. Additionally, the Steering Committee will be responsible for evaluating the TRC project recommendations and make project funding recommendations to the Chief of the Scientific Branch.

The Steering Committee will also oversee the development of an annual report detailing the progress and results of all the projects undertaken during the report period. This report will be made available on the OSPR website.

The Steering Committee will meet at least twice a year, and will at minimum consist of the following members:

- SSEP Coordinator
- OSPR Managers from:
 - Resource Assessment Program
 - Laboratory Services
 - Field Operations/Veterinary Support Services
 - Response Support Program

TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (TRC)

The objective of the TRC is to evaluate the technical merits of the project proposals and provide the initial review and scoring of the projects. These scores are submitted to the Steering Committee for their use in selecting/prioritizing projects for final approval by the Chief of the Scientific Branch and the Administrator.

Staff and representatives with technical expertise in the type of projects being evaluated will serve on the TRC. The committee will consist of eight to ten members, potentially including representatives from the following areas:

- Scientific Field Response Staff
- Marine Safety Branch Staff
- Laboratory Services Program Staff
- Veterinary Services Unit Staff
- Response Support Program Staff
- Non-State representatives (e.g., University, Agency, Industry)

The SSEP Coordinator, from the Scientific Branch, will serve as the chair of the TRC.

Attachment A

SSEP Project Selection Process

1. Soliciting Project Proposals:

Project concepts will be solicited from OSPR staff, and each project must have a sponsor from within OSPR. Work on a project may be done by appropriate contractors with oversight from the OSPR sponsor who acts as the contract manager. All work shall be done in accordance with State contracting policy.

Proposals will be requested once each fiscal year. The format for the Proposed Project Concepts will be simple (Attachment C). It will provide a general description of the proposed project and an explanation of how it fits the selection criteria (Attachment B). The proposals may be up to four pages in length, not including budget data and literature cited.

Project concepts that will be considered for funding shall be related to one of the following topics:

- A. Investigation and evaluation of applied spill prevention and response programs and technologies;
- B. The effects of oil on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- C. The effects of spill response activities on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- D. Best achievable protection strategies;
- E. Marine oil spill wildlife collection and rehabilitation;
- F. Natural resource damage assessment technologies and methods;
- G. Techniques for habitat and species restoration and monitoring
- H. Monitoring and/or evaluation of restoration success

2. Selection Criteria:

The criteria that will be used for project selection are attached. The TRC and the Steering Committee will both use these criteria to evaluate and prioritize the proposals for funding. The ranking will be based on a potential score of five points for each of the criteria. Project sponsors should address these criteria in their initial proposal in order to facilitate review and evaluation of the merits of the project proposal.

3. Selection Process:

The TRC will review the project concepts and generate a numeric score for each. Project sponsor(s) may be asked for additional information to clarify research methods or elements of the project that address one or more of the selection criteria. If additional information is requested, the TRC will review that information before final scores are assigned.

Based on the final assessment by the TRC, a list of projects will be presented to the Steering Committee, ranked by numeric scores.

A meeting of the Steering Committee will be convened and the list of ranked projects will be discussed and prioritized. Based on this final ranking, the Steering Committee will make its funding recommendations to the Chief of the Scientific Branch. In the event that a member of the Committee is a principal investigator, co-investigator, or collaborator on any submitted proposal, that member will be excused from the review process for that proposal.

The Chief of the Scientific Branch will review the prioritized list and submit final recommendations for project funding to the OSPR Administrator for approval.

4. Project Implementation:

Once projects are selected for funding, contracts will be developed in accordance with standard State contracting requirements. These contracts will be managed by the OSPR sponsor in coordination with the agency or entity performing the investigation(s).

Attachment B

SSEP Project Evaluation Criteria

1ST Level Review - Threshold Criteria: If any project does not meet these Threshold Criteria, then it will not be given further consideration for funding. (All criteria will be specified in proposal solicitations).

1. Consistent with program intent - Projects must address one of the following:

- a) Investigation and evaluation of applied prevention and response programs and technologies;
- b) The effects of oil on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- c) The effects of spill response activities on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- d) Best achievable protection strategies;
- e) Oil spill wildlife collection and rehabilitation in marine waters;
- f) Natural resource damage assessment technologies and methods;
- g) Techniques for habitat and species restoration and monitoring; and
- h) Monitoring and/or evaluation of restoration success

2. Technically Feasible - The project must be technically and procedurally sound. Consideration will be given to the level of uncertainty and the degree of success of similar projects that have been conducted in the past.

2ND Level Review – Screening Criteria: Projects that meet the Threshold Criteria shall be further evaluated using the criteria below. These screening criteria shall be used to distinguish between preferred and non-preferred projects. When scoring the projects, a maximum of 5 points will be assigned to each criterion.

1. **Likelihood of Success** - Consider the potential for successful completion and successful outcomes of the proposed research project. This includes the capability and experience of individuals or organizations expected to conduct the research or implement the project.
2. **Quality of Proposed Research** - Consider the level of sophistication and creativity of the study plan.
3. **Scientific Merit** – Evaluate the extent to which this project will advance the science of the subject discipline.
4. **Programmatic Merit** – Determine how well the proposal will meet the intent of the SSEP, and/or its general applicability to oil spill prevention and response activities.
5. **Cost-Effectiveness** - Consider the relationship of expected project costs to expected results and the relevance of those results to program goals. Seek the least costly approach to deliver an equivalent or greater benefit. Consider availability of matching or supplemental funding.
6. **Total Cost and Accuracy of Cost Estimate** - The total cost estimate should include money to design, implement, monitor, and manage the project. Validity of the estimate is determined by the completeness, accuracy, and reliability of methods used to estimate costs.
7. **Originality/Non-Duplication** - Projects should not duplicate other similar investigations that have been conducted or are ongoing. Assess the level of originality of subject matter and the study design.

Attachment C

Outline for Proposed Project Concept

All proposals should be prepared using Microsoft Word. Use 3/4" margins, and 12-point single-spaced Arial font. Proposals should not exceed four pages, *excluding estimated budget and literature cited*. Avoid non-standard abbreviations whenever possible. The project name, the date and page number should be placed in the upper right corner from the second page forward. Please organize your proposal as follows:

- 1) TITLE of PROPOSAL** (≤ 100 characters): The title must clearly describe the project.
- 2) OSPR SPONSOR INFORMATION:** Name, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address for the *OSPR Sponsor* for the project.
- 3) ABSTRACT** (≤ 150 words): A brief description of the purpose or benefit of the project, project methods or design, and expected final result or product.
- 4) HYPOTHESES AND OBJECTIVES:** State the explicit hypotheses and specific aims of the study.
- 5) EXPERIMENTAL PLAN:** Describe the experimental design of the project. This should act towards satisfying the listed objectives of the SSEP. Include names and affiliations of collaborators (letters of collaboration will be required with submission of solicited full proposals).
- 6) SIGNIFICANCE TO OSPR:** Describe how the project will further the goals of the Oil Spill Prevention and Response programs.
- 7) PROJECT DURATION (1-3 years):** The proposal should specifically describe at least one year of work. If the proposal is for multiple years, describe what work will be performed each year and the specific aims that will be investigated within the overall context of the study.
- 8) ESTIMATED BUDGET (This section can be in addition to the four-page limit for the proposal):** Provide a succinct project budget for all years of the project (1-3), outlined according to the following categories: personnel; equipment; supplies; travel; other expenses; and overhead. For multi-year projects, the total funding amount which will be requested for subsequent years should also be noted. A detailed budget for subsequent years is desirable but not necessary. Provide a succinct justification for necessary items such as equipment and materials.
- 9) SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS:** List additional funding that has been received (or applied for) which can be used to directly support this proposal's research.
- 10) LITERATURE CITATIONS (This section can be in addition to the four-page limit for the proposal):** Cite the literature that is referred to or that is relevant to this proposal.

11) END-PRODUCT: Identify what the end-product of the study or project will be (e.g. scientific paper, field test kit, database, written report, etc.).